

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 4288

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, PINT, ES
SUBJ: INTERCESSION ON BEHALF OF TWO JESUITS

1. IN CONNECTION WITH HUMAN RIGHTS MATTERS IN GENERAL
AND RETURNABILITY OF POLITICAL EXILES TO EL SALVADOR,
FOLLOWING CASE MAY BE OF SOME INTEREST.

2. LATE LAST WEEK RECTOR ROMAN MAYORGA OF CATHOLIC
UNIVERSITY ASKED TO SEE ME. HE DESCRIBED CASE OF TWO
SPANISH-BORN JESUITS, DR. LUIS DE SEBASTIAN AND DR.
IGNACIO ELLACURIA, BOTH NOW NATURALIZED CITIZENS OF
EL SALVADOR. ACTIVE IN CHURCH AND UNIVERSITY AFFAIRS,
THEY HAVE ATTRACTED ATTENTION AND BECAME SOMEWHAT
CONTRONVERSIAL IN RECENT YEARS. THEY WENT ABROAD ON
CHURCH AND ACADEMIC BUSINESS IN 1976 BUT WHEN READY TO
RETURN IN EARLY 1977 WERE PREVENTED FROM DOING SO BY
SENSITIVITY OF THE POLITICAL, CHURCH-STATE, AND
PARTICULARLY JESUIT SITUATION.

3. INCREASINGLY DESPERATE WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME,
THE JESUITS PREVAILED UPON RECTOR MAYORGA TO
INTERCEDE FOR THEM WITH PRESIDENT ROMERO. HE DID SO
AND RESIDENT PROFESSED IGNORANCE OF CASE, PROMISED
TO LOOK INTO IT, BUT NEVER THEREAFTER RESPONDED.
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4. EARLY THIS MONTH, JESUITS PRESENTED THEMSELVES
WITH THEIR EL SALVADOR PASSPORTS AT BORDER AND REQUESTED
ENTRY. TO THEIR ASTONISHMENT, THEY WERE ADMITTED
WITHOUT DIFFICULTY. NOW BACK AT CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY,
THEY WERE UNEASY LEST THEIR RETURN AND PRESENCE
SUDDENLY BE DISCOVERED AND THEY BE EJECTED FROM THE

COUNTRY.

5. AT RECTOR'S REQUEST, AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH AGREED-UPON STRATEGY, I INCLUDED MENTION OF THIS CASE IN MY AUGUST 12 CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER RODRIGUEZ PORT. I RATHER CAREFULLY POINTED OUT EXTREME PLEASURE OF JESUITS AT BEING BACK IN EL SALVADOR, THE POSITIVE IMPACT THEIR ADMISSION HAD CREATED IN CHURCH AND SOME OPPOSITION CIRCLES, AND FACT THAT THEIR PRESENCE HERE WAS NOW BEING VIEWED TO A CERTAIN EXTENT AS EVIDENCE OF GOODWILL ON PART OF GOES AND EVEN SOME MODEST "OPENING TO DEMOCRACY." FONMIN SEEMED SOMEWHAT INTRIGUED BY MY RAISING THIS MATTER, TOOK IT WITH GOOD GRACE, SAID HE HAD A CERTAIN PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE WITH BOTH JESUITS, AND LET ME REPEAT ONCE AGAIN THAT THEIR CONTINUING PRESENCE HERE SEEMED A POSITIVE ELEMENT IN OUR SADLY POLARIZED ATMOSPHERE.

5. ON AUGUST 15, I MET AGAIN WITH RECTOR MAYORGA, THIS TIME ACCOMPANIED BY THE TWO JESUITS, DESCRIBED TO THEM MY TALK WITH FONMIN, AND DISCOURSED AT SOME LENGTH UPON POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PLIGHT OF TODAY'S EL SALVADOR. RECTOR AND BOTH JESUITS APPEARED TO APPRECIATE OUR EFFORTS ON THEIR BEHALF AND AGREED THAT WE WOULD BE IN FURTHER CONTACT WITH EACH OTHER IN THE FUTURE.

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